

REMARKS***Claim Status***

By way of the above amendment, claims 1-13 have been cancelled and claims 14-41 introduced. Currently, claims 14-41 are pending.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC §112

In paragraphs 1-13 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-13 under 35 USC §112. Claims 1-13 have been cancelled and new claims 14-41 introduced. Accordingly, the §112 rejections are now believed moot and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC §102

In paragraphs 14 – 20 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 7-11 and 13 under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Kara (US Patent 6,233,568). Applicants traverse.

The present invention is directed to a method of franking and processing or posting parcels. Accordingly, a customer orders a franking number. The order includes destination data of the parcel. The franking number is generated in association with the destination data. The franking number is further stored in a database for a limited amount of time. The franking number is human readable.

Additionally, the customer, upon receipt of the franking number, prints the number on the parcel. When the parcel is later introduced into the mailstream where the destination data and franking number are read. The database is then searched for a matching franking number. Upon the finding of a match, the respective database entry is so marked such that the franking number may be not be reused – namely, it is expired. In addition to a match of the franking number, a match of the destination address is also made.

As a result of the present method, fraud is prevented. Additional benefits to the present invention include the ability to provide feedback to the customer regarding destination data (e.g. forwarding addresses, formatting etc.) and parcel tracking within the mailstream. As the franking number is human readable, it is easy to use and implement. Likewise, reduction in costs over more complex anti-fraud measures is also appreciated. Further still, the need for encryptions and complex representations

is obviated. In effect, fraudulent use of the franking number would be limited to sending a parcel at the same time to the same address.

Kara does not disclose a humanly readable franking number associated with a destination address and stored in a database for a limited time period. Rather Kara is directed to using a complex bar code including encrypted information to impart postage upon a parcel. In operation, it is necessary to exchange encrypted information with a customer, print the complex bar code on the parcel to be delivered and read and subsequently verify the bar code's encrypted data in order to process the parcel. This method is particularly costly from an engineering and execution perspective. Additionally, it is based on a fundamentally different approach to franking and fraud prevention as the present invention. The strength of Kara lay in its encryption and ability to convey franking information without easy detection. The present invention takes an opposite approach of using humanly readable characters as the means for communicating the franking information. The strength of present invention's method, along with the human readable franking number, is the association with the destination data as well as the time limited storage in the database.

New independent claims 14 and 31 have been amended to more clearly disclose the above discussed differences over Kara. The dependent claims are also not disclosed in Kara for at least the reasons set out above. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

Claim Rejections - §103

In paragraphs 21-27, the Examiner rejected claims 2-4 and 6 under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable in view of Kara. Applicants traverse. Claims 2-4 and 6 have been cancelled and their subject matter reintroduced in the new dependent claims. For at least the reasons set out above, Kara does not anticipate the present claimed invention. Fundamental differences exist between Kara and the present invention, such as the human readable franking code stored in a database and linked to the destination address, which Kara further does not suggest. There is no teaching within Kara to motivate one skilled in the art to completely abandon its' fundamental teaching of an encrypted bar code in favor of the human readable bar code. Nor is there any teaching to suggest a different usage for the franking number. Accordingly,

the pending dependent claims disclosing the subject matter of claims 2-4 and 6 are believed patentable over Kara and reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

In paragraphs 26 and 27, claim 5 was rejected under 35 USC §103 over Kara in view of Zlotnick (5,737,438). Applicants traverse. Claim 5 has been rejected and its subject matter reintroduced in the newly presented dependent claims. At least for the reasons set out above, no motivation exists within Kara to consider abandoning its base teaching in favor of an opposite teaching of the present invention. Zlotnick was used in the rejection to disclose the use of an optical character recognition program to scan labels. Zlotnick does not provide the missing teachings nor motivation in Kara to arrive at the present invention. Accordingly, reconsideration of this rejection is requested.

In paragraphs 28 and 29, claim 12 was rejected under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over Kara in view of Kato *et al.* (5,971,587). Applicants traverse. Claim 12 has been cancelled and its subject matter reintroduced in the newly presented dependent claims. Kato was cited in the rejection for teaching of a package and mail delivery system based upon tracking numbers. Kato does not provide the missing teachings nor motivation in Kara to arrive at the present invention. Accordingly, reconsideration of this rejection is requested.

CONCLUSION

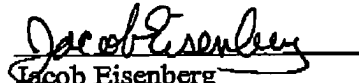
The present response is intended to correspond with the Revised Amendment Format. Applicants understand that with the Revised Amendment Format, the provisions of 37 CFR §1.121 are waived. Should any part of the present response not be in full compliance with the requirements of the Revised Amendment Format, the Examiner is asked to contact the undersigned for immediate correction.

No new matter has been added by way of the aforementioned amendments.

The Examiner has cited several references in the rejection's *Conclusion* as pertinent prior art. Applicants have reviewed these references and at least for the reasons set out above believe the present application, as currently claimed, is allowable over the references.

In the event that the transmittal form is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension of time and/or other relief is required, Applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No.: 502464 referencing client reference: 2001P05313WOUS. However, the Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

Date: 12/16/2004
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